

Environment & Energy

Environmental degradation threatens health, undermines long-term economic growth, and impairs critical ecological systems upon which sustainable development depends. USAID pursues an integrated approach towards environmental protection by promoting sustainable natural resource management; improving conservation of biologically significant habitats; reducing the threat of global climate change; increasing the provision of environmentally sound energy services; and protecting the world's environment for long-term sustainability.

Biodiversity Conservation and Protected Areas Management

Approach:

- Promoting sustainable economic uses of biological resources
- Building local capacity for the management of parks and protected areas
- Facilitating the development of collaborative management strategies with local community partners
- Promoting the establishment of public/private partnerships for ecological enterprises
- Creating a model for generating and capturing conservation revenue
- Increasing public awareness and participation in protected areas management

Promoting Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth

The *Biodiversity Conservation and Economic Growth Project* comes as a follow-on activity to the Global Environmental Facility Project implemented since 1995. Launched in May 2000, the new initiative provides continued support to the Bulgarian national nature protection management system at both the national and local level. Thus far, USAID has assisted the Ministry of Environment and Water in the finalization, review, and public hearings of the management plans for the Rila and Central Balkan National Parks, as well as in the development of a management plan for the newly established Rila Monastery Nature Park. At the central level, the Project assists the Ministry to capture protected area revenue by establishing and testing innovative financing mechanisms. At the local level, the project is developing operational pilot projects for eco-enterprise development through local ecotourism and non-timber forest product activities in the park regions. During the "Green Gold of Bulgaria" campaign, a national campaign for increasing public awareness on biodiversity conservation and other protected area issues, USAID funded a number of media events, as well as developed a comprehensive biodiversity curriculum for the Ministry of Education and Science.

Establishment of Sustainable Environmental Partnerships

Approach:

- Address urban and industrial environmental problems with market-based solutions
- Promote the establishment of enduring cross-border environmental partnerships



USAID/Bulgaria
Partners in Transition

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- Facilitate the exchange of best practices
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- Increase trade and investment in environmental goods and services
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The *Ecolinks Program* is a five-year regional effort that links Bulgarian businesses, local governments, and associations with counterparts in the U.S. or within the Central and East European region in solving common urban and industrial environmental problems. It comprises of three inter-connected and actively cooperating components: Partnership Grants, Investment and Trade, and Information Technology.

Three types of competitively awarded grants are available under the EcoLinks' *Partnership Grants* component: *Quick Response Awards* of up to \$5,000 (designed to meet the immediate and small-scale needs of organizations exploring potential cross-border partnerships); *Challenge Grants* of up to \$50,000 (supporting one-year cooperative projects between partners from within the region or between the region and the U.S.); two pilot *Twinning Grants* of up to \$250,000 (supporting two-year cooperative projects between U.S. and local multiplier organizations). The *Investment and Trade* component of the program links organizations in need of environmental technology partners with environmental businesses in the United States. The *Information Technology* component relates to the EcoLinks website (www.ecolinks.org), providing up-to-date information on regional experiences in dealing with critical industrial and urban environmental problems, case studies on best practices and technologies, links to other relevant sites, and contacts with potential partner organizations.

Energy Efficiency

Approach:

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- Develop a sustainable mechanism for commercial financing of municipal energy efficiency projects
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- Increase the number of bankable proposals developed by Bulgarian companies and municipalities by providing technical assistance on project development
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- Share the commercial risk of financing institutions by providing up to 50% guarantee on energy efficiency loans
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USAID's *Municipal Energy Efficiency Project* assists selected Bulgarian municipalities and companies in introducing energy saving technology and developing sustainable energy efficiency financing mechanisms. The project contributes to increased fiscal decentralization by assisting municipalities to raise capital for energy efficiency activities, as well as supports the institutional development of the Municipal Energy Efficiency Network. Technical assistance focuses on both project development and host country capacity building to identify and prepare bankable proposals for municipal energy projects. Projects are initially funded under a Development Credit Authority agreement with the United Bulgarian Bank, providing U.S. Government guarantee of up to 50% on energy efficiency loans. While the Project's first year of operation was characterized by the usual "learning curve", today the project is proud to secure \$1.00 of commercial project financing for every \$0.11 of technical assistance. This nearly 10:1 leverage is an accomplishment worth highlighting.

USAID FACTS:

- The first two national park management plans developed and introduced
- Almost \$7 million committed to conserve Bulgaria's natural heritage
- 34 Challenge Grants and 33 Quick Response Awards to Bulgarian companies and municipalities, amounting to approximately \$1,600,000
- The first municipal energy efficiency project loans secured in Bulgaria under USAID's loan guarantee facility totaling a ceiling of over \$6 million
- 4 pilot activities launched on ecotourism development and non-timber forest product collection in the municipalities surrounding the Rila and Central Balkan National parks